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SATURDAY EVENING, JANUARY 5, 1957

Quartet in A minor, Opus 51, No. 2
for two violins, viola, and cello

Brahms

Allegro non troppo
Andante moderato
Quasi Minuetto, moderato, alternating with Allegretto vivace
Finale: Allegro non assai

Quintet in B minor, Opus 115
for clarinet, two violins, viola, and cello

Brahms

Allegro
Adagio
Andantino—Presto non assai, ma con sentimento
Con moto

Sextet in G major, Opus 36
for two violins, two violas, and two cellos

Brahms

Allegro non troppo
Scherzo: Allegro non troppo—Presto giocoso—Allegro
Adagio
Poco Allegro

Quartet in A minor, Opus 51, No. 2

As is well known, Brahms was reticent about producing his first symphony, and worked long over it. Ever since Schubert remarked early in the nineteenth century how difficult it was to write anything after Beethoven, that great shadow seemed to be at the elbow of every classical-minded composer: at Brahms's most of all. And what was true of symphonic writing was true of the string quartet. A piano quintet, piano quartets, sextets, a horn trio, a cello sonata, all came from his pen before he allowed himself to publish anything for the more usual (and more Beethovenian and difficult!) chamber-music media, the string quartet and the violin sonata. The Quartets of Opus 51 date from the summer of 1873—the composer's forty-first year. But though they are the first published quartets of his, they are by all accounts not the first he ever wrote—as one would surmise from the polished quartet style of the present work, a model of appropriateness in this medium. (Brahms told someone he had destroyed 'at least a score' of quartets before these two were written.)

The A minor Quartet is often stern in expression, but not in an over-intellectual or other-worldly way; and there is a good deal of singing and dancing in it. The piece is extraordinarily unified, though attempts to show how this is accomplished—by citing instances of motivic carry-over from one movement to another—are not altogether convincing. None of the 'related' particles of theme is longer than three or four notes. It is perhaps enough to feel what one authority calls the 'organic completeness' in the work's tightly woven musical fabric.

The opening movement plunges *in media res* with an expressive long-lined melody in the first violin, rich in motifs, but with a spontaneous drive that is quite irresistible. The first four notes of this melody are particularly

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important: and the arresting effect of the whole is emphasized by the rather rough open fifth which is the first sound we hear. The 'second subject' opens with a wavering tune in the major key marked 'grazioso ed animato', full of the sentimental gaiety of the Viennese. The sentiment, and the parallel thirds which express it, may remind us of the *Liebeslieder Waltzes*, Opus 52, which belong to this same period. The recapitulation, which receives its first hint in the cello, is fairly straightforward. A coda is added, reverting to the stern-ness of the minor key and working up an animato close of considerable rhythmic and contrapuntal complexity.

The main idea of the slow movement is a lyrical melody showing graceful lines and a small range of notes, quite typical of Brahms. The second theme is canonic between the first violin and the cello, against dramatic tremolos. There is a third theme, of ethereal cast, which reappears in the coda. If we were to call these three ideas A, B, and C, then the over-all diagram of what happens would be ABCAC. The second appearance of A comes in an unexpected key, F major (the main key of the movement being A major), and is beautifully varied in scoring.

The 'light' movement is a fantasia-like alternation of a minuet with a vivace section in fast staccato notes. The minuet is of a slightly veiled or melancholy spirit: independence of expression may spring from its construction in three-bar phrases. The vivace section is set out in close imitative polyphony. The two ideas also appear combined: in the course of the movement, the minuet theme is twice heard in canon between the second violin and the cello, with an accompanying canon in the other two instruments derived from the main idea of the vivace.

Vivid cross-rhythms mark the main theme of the finale. It has often been described as 'Hungarian' in flavor, and is subjected to many varied treatments in the course of this bold piece: including slow chordal statement, various canonic versions, and a telescoped presentation in stepped-up tempo towards the end. The over-all form is that of a rondo, with contrapuntal developments taking over the role of the central episode.

Quintet in B minor, Opus 115

'It is interesting that, for different reasons, the clarinet played an important part in the last years of Mozart and Brahms, and inspired both composers to write music of a singularly rich, autumnal beauty.' (Philip Radcliffe, in the new Grove.) Both composers were greatly assisted by having fine clarinet soloists among their acquaintance—Mozart by Stadler, Brahms by his friend Richard Mühlfeld. Brahms's treatment of the clarinet is different from Mozart's, though the musical quality may be comparable. Brahms creates, characteristically, a rich, plummy polyphonic texture, in which the clarinet and the strings are scarcely differentiated. Only occasionally does he give his themes the sort of question-and-answer lay-out between clarinet and ensemble so prevalent in Mozart.

The clarinet Trio, the present Quintet, and the two clarinet Sonatas, all date from the early 1890's. The specific date of the Quintet is 1891. The previous year Brahms, already suffering from the cancer which caused his death, had produced a String Quintet which, he announced to his friends, was to be his last composition. Thus the last piano works and these clarinet pieces, written in a great subsequent burst of creative activity, were

compulsive expressions: their spirit of personal resignation (partly bitter), of farewell, or retrospection, has no parallel in the earlier works of Brahms. The Brahmsian sentiment is here expressed haltingly, in fragments of sweetly-sad motifs, often equivocal as to harmonic status. The fragmentation of themes so characteristic of the Viennese School in our own century thus finds perhaps a nineteenth-century source in Brahms: the great admiration felt by Schoenberg for Brahms is, for example, well known.

The first movement of the Clarinet Quintet illustrates some of these things. Its long brooding melodic lines are given out hesitatingly, as it were with many an inward sigh. And the main theme has both major and minor inflections to its harmony.

Movement Two is a nocturne-like piece, of shimmering textural quality (one notes especially such details as the weaving clarinet counterpoint to a theme expressed in octaves by the muted violins). A clarinet recitative introduces a decorative, plaintive middle section, more soloistic than anything else in the Quintet. The theme of this is recalled briefly in major key at the close.

There follows a movement whose structure is unprecedented in Brahms: an Andantino theme is exposed, developed, and rounded off, and then transformed into the main theme for a whole new section in faster tempo. This 'Introduction and Allegro' is expressed in uneven, wayward rhythms, which gradually fall into place as part of a very logical (though unique) over-all design.

The Quintet closes with a theme and five variations. Although the variation techniques are similar to Mozart's in their frequent highlighting of individual strands in the texture, a notable Brahmsian trait is the way these individual strands are so often divided between two or three instruments. A coda relates the variation-theme to the main theme of Movement One, and the final cadence repeats that of the earlier movement, only with a more intense scoring.

Sextet in G major, Opus 36

Brahms's two string sextets (of which this is the second and lesser-known) are both from the early period of his career. The choice of medium has two significant aspects: first, Brahms was always fascinated by fine problems in texture, habitually preferring fairly ample sound-resources in his chamber works; second, his consideration of his relationship to the classical masters (a central thing in his psychology) often led him, among other things, to delve into the Austrian divertimento style, whence a good number of the classic profundities had their source. The two orchestral serenades are the most obvious examples of this 'researching' type of composition, but others are to be found in such works as the Haydn Variations and the less-orthodoxly-scored of the early chamber works, especially the sextets. And since divertimento and Haydn were synonymous in Brahms's mind, we find many an echo of the Haydn style in these pieces.

The G major Sextet was composed in 1864-5. Brahms told someone that he had meant it as a memento of a lost love, and he is supposed to have intended dedicating it to Agathe von Siebold, who had broken his heart (and evidently her own as well) by refusing his proposal of marriage some six years before. Karl Geiringer, in his book on Brahms, reads a great deal of significance into these extra-musical facts. Indeed, he relates them directly

to the score, by pointing out that a recurrent short phrase in the violins near the end of the exposition of Movement One is made up of the notes a-g-a-d-h-e (h being b-natural in German terminology—and Brahms never was a good speller). The only difficulty is that Brahms repeats this theme in a different key later on, and its notes then spell d-c-d-g-e-a. It remains for some more alert musical scholar to unscramble this second set of letters—perhaps they form the christian name of Mrs. Brahms senior, who knows?

The Sextet, a model of transparent chamber-music textures, opens with a poetic and broadly tuneful sonata-form movement. Especially notable is the fine counter-statement of the opening theme in the first cello. The development section is instigated by 'one of the most brilliant contrapuntal tours de force extant' (Tovey)—the material for contrapuntal treatment being two prominent motives from the first theme, with their inversions.

The scherzo and its trio are in contrasting tempos. The return of the scherzo is varied in scoring, and there is a brief animato coda.

The third movement is a theme with five variations. The opening motive is the same one Brahms later employed in the slow movement of his Double Concerto Opus 102. The final variation, the most ornate of the set, expands into a free coda.

The finale is based on a pair of contrasted ideas—the one scurrying but sharply outlined, the other serenely singing. The first idea is treated in imitation at the outset, and fugally developed in different ways at two later points in the piece. The whole is a highly successful reflection of the typical Haydn finale—a mixture of sonata form, rondo, free contrapuntal horseplay, and general vitality.

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SATURDAY EVENING, JANUARY 12, 1957

Quartet in F major
for two violins, viola, and cello

Ravel

Allegro moderato (Très doux)
Assez vif, très rythmé
Très lent
Vif et agité

Quartet in G minor, Opus 74, No. 3
(the 'Horseman' Quartet)
for two violins, viola, and cello

Haydn

Allegro
Largo assai
Menuetto: Allegretto
Finale: Allegro con brio

Quartet in C minor, Opus 15
for piano, violin, viola, and cello

Fauré

Allegro molto moderato
Scherzo: Allegro vivo
Adagio
Allegro molto

Quartet in F major

Ravel

Ravel's chamber-music output in so-called 'abstract' style is dominated by three works—this Quartet, the Sonata for violin and cello, and the Piano Trio. Of these the Quartet was the earliest and also the most free and flamboyant in conception. Speaking of the Trio, Roland Manuel comments that it 'shows a quality of mastery quite different from the frenzied melancholy which . . . animates the Quartet,' and he adds, interestingly: 'At the end of his life Ravel once compared the two works by declaring in my presence that without much regret he would exchange the technical knowledge of his mature work for the artless strength revealed in his youthful quartet.'

The Quartet dates from 1902-3, when Ravel, at twenty-seven, had just emerged from the Conservatoire composition classes of Gédalge and Fauré. The dedication in fact reads: 'A mon cher Maître, Gabriel Fauré'. The Quartet, like the Sonatine for piano of two years later, adapted classic form to new thematic procedures and invested it with new color devices. The thematic procedures are mostly symmetrical mosaic-like patterns of elongation, rather than dynamic developments à la Beethoven. From Fauré, Ravel learned the device of combining first and second themes for climactic effect; and also the technique found in the chamber music of Franck, d'Indy, and Debussy as well, of adapting the first and second themes of the opening movement to new uses in subsequent movements. The new color devices include exotic melody-formations such as the Dorian and Phrygian modes and the whole-tone scale; the sonorous amplification of melodies in parallel

chords; and complex rhythmic schemes such as the combined 3-4 and 6-8 of the scherzo or the quintuple metres of the finale.

Orientalism and even impressionism are words which have been applied to the Quartet—and from the outset the work was widely considered to have been much influenced by Debussy. Certainly here and in the song-cycle *Shéhérazade* of 1902 Ravel comes closer than anywhere else to an affinity with his great contemporary and compatriot. The two men were at this time on quite cordial terms, though they later became less-friendly rivals. Ravel showed Debussy the score of the Quartet, and the latter was entirely enthusiastic, begging the author not to alter one note of his score (Ravel admitted later that despite this advice he made considerable revisions in the opening movement).

Quartet in G minor, Opus 74, No. 3

Haydn

The 'Horseman' or 'Rider' Quartet (No. 74 in the standard Breitkopf und Härtel listing of the 83 Haydn quartets) is so called from the stern, galloping motion in its introduction and in the main theme of its finale. It is the last of six quartets produced in the year 1793—three in Opus 71 and three in Opus 74. Thus the master's final years were as fruitful in quartets as in symphonies—though the former may not be so well known.

The opening movement is terse in expression and economically phrased. The galloping introduction theme is heard again briefly in the central development section. The 'second subject' is a waltz-like theme, which retains its sunny gaiety in the reprise as well: a Haydn characteristic, notable also in the finale, is the habit of turning to the major mode for the last sections of a movement in the minor.

Extreme contrasts of key are typical of the mature Haydn. The second movement here is mostly in E major—with an alternating section in E minor. The main theme of this Adagio, though simple in outline, often does the unexpected—in punctuation, in harmony, in the decorations it acquires on its restatement (for example, the series of sudden quiet tremolos).

There is a gracious Minuet; the alternating trio-section is bold, chromatic, and imitative—giving a momentary cloudiness to the expression.

As so often in Haydn, the best things of all are reserved for the finale. There is a dramatic quality in the syncopations of the main theme. The top part soars to a higher range than before, and at the same time there is a more conscious interrelation of the parts than elsewhere in the Quartet. The 'second subject'—in reality a fairly complex cluster of several different ideas—is recapitulated at the end in G major instead of the expected G minor.

Quartet in C minor, Opus 15

Fauré

Fauré's chamber-music output consists of two piano quartets, two piano quintets, a violin sonata, a cello sonata, and a single string quartet. Most of this music belongs to the last third of the nineteenth century, and Fauré was one of the few French musicians of that generation to devote himself in any serious degree to chamber music. One notes also from the above listing that characteristically his chamber-music forms included his own instrument, the piano.

The first of the two piano quartets is perhaps the best-known chamber work of Fauré—certainly the best-known outside France. Written in 1879, when the composer was thirty-four, it was introduced at a concert of the newly-founded Société Nationale. The work demonstrates the facility, the clarity of outline, and the grasp of classical form, which are so much the mark of Saint-Saens's style. Fauré always acknowledged his great indebtedness to Saint-Saens, his only teacher. At the same time, Fauré frequently strikes out on his own here; and one notes the harmonic touches, the almost-imperceptible subtleties of modulation, which are Fauré's trademark; as well as the tendency, always strong in this composer, to expose his ideas in free canonic patterns.

The first movement is of classic construction, with many changes in the character of its 'first subject' in the course of development, and an extraordinary lyrical grace and poise to the 'second subject'. The latter, one of the happiest inspirations in the entire work, is also an instance of the 'free canonic patterns' mentioned. Such imitations, though intricate, seem most natural to Fauré. The favorite movement of the work has usually been the scherzo, suggesting Saint-Saens or Mendelssohn in its fairy lightness and its playful rhythmic variety. The slow movement is a song-like piece with a canonic middle section whose theme reappears, differently scored, towards the end. The finale is a boisterous and vital affair, built mostly on an upward-driving scale. There is a brilliant and full-bodied closing section in the major key.

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SATURDAY EVENING, JANUARY 19, 1957

Quartet No. 2 in A minor
for two violins, viola, and cello

Oskar Morawetz

Allegro energico
Adagio—Più mosso—Adagio
Allegro vivace, alternating with Adagio espressivo

Quartet in F major, K. 370
for oboe, violin, viola, and cello

Mozart

Allegro
Adagio
Rondo: Allegro

Quartet in E flat minor, Opus 30
for two violins, viola, and cello

Tchaikovsky

Andante sostenuto—Allegro moderato—Andante
Allegretto vivo e scherzando
Andante funebre e doloroso ma con moto
Finale: Allegro non troppo e risoluto

Quartet No. 2 in A minor

Oskar Morawetz

Dr. Morawetz, Czech-born Canadian composer, is a lecturer in the Faculty of Music of the Royal Conservatory. His two most recent major works—the Symphony No. 1 and the Quartet No. 2—were worked upon more or less simultaneously over the years 1952–55. Both received their radio premieres in the spring of 1956.

The Quartet is a robust, fully-developed, and highly unified chamber work in three movements. This is music of powerful developmental urge. Extraneous associations may perhaps suggest themselves at certain points. For example, the modal quality of themes in the outer movements may call to mind the folkish inflections often adopted by Dvorak (a composer Dr. Morawetz has studied intimately). Or, a more specific instance: the composer himself reveals that the muted, atmospheric touches of the second movement were suggested by some filmed scenes of the desolation of war, which affected him deeply.

The first movement is concerned mostly with the development of a dynamic motive given out in canon at the start. A secondary theme, longer-lined and more melodic, serves for contrast, and is given a double statement, first violin answered by cello. The reprise is bright and jubilant in harmonization. A coda revives the canonic treatment. The final cadence is strongly original, ending on an A-minor chord with a super-imposed G-sharp: an effect which is complete and yet ironically *incomplete* at the same time.

Out of a succession of veiled unrelated sounds—weird augmented seconds, pizzicati, trills—the slow movement builds a long lamenting melody in the

first violin. New themes are added, a climax is reached, and the music subsides into a new section, in slightly faster tempo. The martial rhythm here is perhaps suggestive of a funeral procession. The return of the opening material is made the great dramatic event of the movement: the marking is fortissimo, and the elements are compressed and combined in a quite unexpected way. This effect is comparable to some of the Beethoven reprises. The subsidiary themes reappear; again there is beauty and ingenuity in the approach to the final cadence.

The finale has two principal groups of ideas, each characterized by a separate tempo. These alternate twice, so that a capsulized description of the movement would be represented by the letters ABABA. Part 'A' includes the energetic viola theme of the opening, with its excited accompaniment, as well as a prominent theme of hesitant, nervous expression, given initially by the first violin. The slower 'B' section is marked by a dirge-like insistent wail. The links between sections are skillful and thematic. The return of 'B' is varied and somewhat curtailed. The final appearance of 'A' is a thorough re-working of the original theme in faster tempo (*Presto*). At a broad climactic point, the composer re-introduces part of the final section of the first movement, with penetrating high cello notes. This time the cadence point is a vigorous, unequivocal A minor.

Quartet in F major, K. 370

Mozart

This delightful work was composed in 1781 in Munich as a showpiece for a brilliant oboist, Friedrich Ramm, of that city. It represents the same spirited combination of chamber-music and the concerto style which we find in the Clarinet Quintet and the two Piano Quartets of the later years—and, although of smaller dimensions, it is quite on a par with them artistically.

The opening *Allegro* exhibits its initial motive several times throughout, in a variety of ways. The central part of the piece, instead of developing stated material, discourses on some new ideas. The oboe part lies mostly in the upper octave here, and shares in the statements of themes on a give-and-take basis with the other instruments.

The *Adagio* is an exquisite solo arietta for the oboe. The expressive wide leaps familiar from Mozart's opera-seria and clarinet-solo styles are notable; but they are transformed by the plaintive tonal quality of the oboe into a quite unique kind of eloquence.

The finale is a six-eight rondo in Mozart's gayest mood. The most concerto-like of the three movements in construction, it is also the purest display-piece. A feature without parallel in Mozart is the middle episode, where the oboe adventurously breaks into a quick four-four time while the accompanying strings retain the original metre.

Quartet in E flat minor, Opus 30

Tchaikovsky

All three Tchaikovsky quartets (this is the third) belong to the early part of his career. The present work was in fact composed in 1876, the year before the fateful turning-point represented musically in the Fourth Symphony—a turning-point created by circumstances of his impossible marriage, attempted suicide, and first correspondence with Mme von Meck. Though the mood of

THE PARLOW STRING QUARTET was organized in 1941 by Kathleen Parlow and Isaac Mamott. The present members have been together since 1951. The Quartet has played innumerable programmes on the C.B.C. and in public concerts throughout Ontario. It has appeared in Ottawa, Winnipeg, twice for the Toronto Women's Music Club at Eaton Auditorium, and has given several annual series of chamber music at the Royal Conservatory. Miss Parlow and Mr. Mamott are members of the school's faculty; Mr. Benac is an assistant concertmaster of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Mr. Solomon its principal violist.

the E flat minor Quartet is gloomy and elegiac (at least in its first and third movements), this is for once not attributable to personal pessimism; instead, the clue is found in the dedication, which inscribes the work to the memory of the violinist F. G. Laub.

The first movement, with its brooding andante introduction and epilogue, and its unrestrained emotional expression, suggests a romantic 'program' of some sort. Tchaikovsky often provided such guides to his music, but in this case left the music to speak for itself. An arresting funeral-march rhythm pervades the first movement, which has a highly characteristic main melody of long lines and (again) brooding colors. The second and fourth movements, by contrast, are brighter, and more formalized.

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